



Department of Veterans Affairs

# Diversity@Work

<http://www.diversity.va.gov>

Volume 12, Issue 11  
August 2013

## Message from the DAS

### Inside:

**VACO/Field Notes** | [Page 2](#)  
**Training** | [Page 3](#)  
**Targeted Disabilities** | [Page 4](#)  
**WRP Update** | [Page 4](#)  
**VALU** | [Page 5](#)  
**Policy Alerts** | [Page 6](#)  
**MyCareer@VA** | [Page 6](#)  
**D&I Training** | [Page 7](#)  
**Unconscious Bias** | [Page 9](#)  
**VA Demographics** | [Page 10](#)  
**Calendar** | [Page 11](#)

### Bookmark:

**Community provider Mental Health Toolkit**  
<http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/communityproviders>

Have a dispute?  
VA's Alternative Dispute Resolution program can help:  
<http://www.va.gov/adr>.

Have an EEO complaint?  
Contact the Office of Resolution Management at (888) 737-3361 within 45 calendar days of the alleged incident.

Greetings, all. I want to begin by reminding all VA employees that Secretary Shinseki's 2013 Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Diversity, and No FEAR Policy statement is available online at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/policy/statement.aspx>. You are encouraged to read and disseminate throughout the Department this summary of VA's workplace policies and workforce protections that address EEO, diversity and inclusion, workplace harassment, workplace violence and bullying, whistleblower protections, reasonable accommodations, conflict management, Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act (USERRA) rights, and related mandatory training.

Word about VA's various Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month events continues to pour into the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI). I am frequently made aware of the great work being accomplished by the many LGBT Special Emphasis Program Managers at their respective facilities. I know numerous individuals put in a great deal of effort to ensure that VA effectively commemorated LGBT Pride Month across the Nation. This work epitomizes VA's "I CARE" values and I congratulate you for the success of your programs.

On June 26, 2013, the Supreme Court ruled that Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act is unconstitutional. As a result of this decision, the United States Office of Personnel Management will now be able to extend benefits to Federal employees and annuitants who have legally married a spouse of the same sex. [Continued on the next page.](#)

## Commemorate

### Women's Equality Day

This year marks the 93rd anniversary of the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which granted women the right to vote. As a joint resolution to the 19th amendment, the United States Congress designated August 26th as "Women's Equality Day," in 1971. As posted by the National Women's History Project, the joint resolution stated that "the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that August 26th of each year is designated as Women's Equality Day, and the President is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation annually in commemoration of that day in 1920, on which the women of America were first given the right to vote, and that day in 1970, on which a nationwide demonstration for women's rights took place." [Continued on page 7.](#)



"Exhibit no. 36": Woman Suffrage Parade, Washington DC, March 1913 (National Archives)

# Message from the DAS

[Continued from the previous page.](#)

The new benefits administration letter for Federal agencies on the extension of insurance benefits to same-sex spouses of married Federal employees and annuitants can be found online at <http://www.opm.gov/retirement-services/publications-forms/benefits-administration-letters/2013/13-203.pdf>. I want to remind all VA employees that we are striving to building a diverse workforce and inclusive workplace to deliver outstanding public service in the 21st century. For more information on diversity and inclusion training offered by ODI, read more on [page 7](#).

Finally, please join me in commemorating Women's Equality Day on August 26 and be sure to read more beginning on [page 1](#). ~Georgia Coffey, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion



*Georgia Coffey*

## VACO/Field Notes

### ***It's Time to Start Planning Activities for Hispanic Heritage Month***

Hispanic Heritage Month (HHM), September 15 through October 15, commemorates the contributions Hispanics have made to American society and culture. The National Council of Hispanic Employment Program Managers recently announced the 2013 Hispanic Heritage Month theme, "Hispanics: Serving and Leading Our Nation with Pride and Honor." Now is an opportune time for facilities to begin planning their HHM events. ODI encourage you to make them educational. For more information about planning HHM activities, contact your local VA EEO office. For information about the Hispanic Employment Program (HEP), visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/hispanic.aspx> or contact Arlene Gonzalez, National HEP Manager, ODI, [Arlene.Gonzalez2@va.gov](mailto:Arlene.Gonzalez2@va.gov).

### ***Functional Organizational Manual***

VA operates the Nation's largest integrated health care system and serves as the principal advocate for America's Veterans and their families. As the second largest Federal agency with employees working at locations throughout the United States, its territories, and the Philippines, it is imperative to have one source of information that is easily accessible, up to date, and describes the Department and its many component organizations.

To meet this need, VA's Office of Policy and Planning formed a working group, including employees from across VA. The newly developed Functional Organization Manual (FOM) is the product of the working group and will serve as the single authoritative reference that documents the Department's most current organizational structure, missions, functions, and tasks. It describes what gets done, by whom, for whom, and under what authorities. It serves as a quick but thorough VA reference guide.

The FOM is organized by chapters that represent the Administrations, staff offices and staff organizations. It contains current organization charts, mission statements, organization overviews, functions and tasks, and a Points of Contact Directory for each organization in the FOM. It was designed as a reference tool that is just as useful for an employee on his/her first day of work as it is for the seasoned staff member.

The FOM is a resource and tool that VA encourages you to use in your departmental planning and training. It is designed to be a dynamic document that, over time, will reflect key changes which will further enhance synchronized and coordinated actions across the Department to ensure optimal execution of the VA mission and strategy.

The FOM is available on the VA Intranet. To access the FOM, go to the VA Intranet Home page/Important Links pane or the VA Intranet Employee Resources page/Reference section. Additional information about scheduled FOM updates and plans for developing the FOM will be communicated in the coming months. In the meantime, recommended changes may be submitted to Susan Sullivan, Service Director, Office of Policy and Planning (OPP), at [Susan.Sullivan2@va.gov](mailto:Susan.Sullivan2@va.gov).

# Training

## VSSC Online Training

ODI announces the availability of training on the Veterans Health Administration's Support Service Center (VSSC) Human Resources (HR) Reporting Tools. VA uses VSSC to store HR data for all of VA in an easy to use reporting format. This interactive training is designed to alert a wide range of managers, HR, equal employment opportunity (EEO) and diversity specialists to VSSC's HR query applications. All managers have a duty to ensure there is equal opportunity in the workplace with regard to hiring, promotions, and other terms and conditions of employment. This training provides guidance on how to properly use the applications to conduct various workforce analyses, identify triggers, and define and distinguish between Relevant Civilian Labor Force and Civilian Labor Force. A training class will be offered on Wednesday, September 18, 2013, from 10 a.m. to noon (EDT) ([https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink\\_redirect.jsp?linkId=REGISTRATION&scheduleID=2569357](https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=REGISTRATION&scheduleID=2569357)). This session will be conducted via Live Meeting. You can register using the relevant link above. Once you click on the link, you will need to sign into the VA Talent Management System (TMS) and click confirm. Spaces are available on first-come, first-serve basis. If this date does not work for you, you can use TMS to request additional dates. If you have any questions or concerns, contact Ryan Pugh, Management and Program Analyst, ODI, at [Ryan.Pugh2@va.gov](mailto:Ryan.Pugh2@va.gov).

### **Mandatory EEO, Diversity, and Conflict Management Training for Managers and Supervisors Updated**

The mandatory Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Diversity, and Conflict Management Training for Managers and Supervisors has been updated. Revisions include updates on EEO laws and regulations, VA's Disability Employment Program (Schedule A Hiring Process and Reasonable Accommodation), and understanding cultural competence and leveraging diversity for the best organizational performance. SES/Title 38, managers and supervisors have until September 20, 2013, to complete this course to meet the biennial requirement as directed in Secretary Shinseki's EEO, Diversity, and No FEAR Policy Statement issued May 31, 2013. TMS administrators should assign TMS Course # 1328672 (DVA-017) to the learning plans of SES/Title 38, managers and supervisors. Prior to uploading the revised course, managers and supervisors who are currently in the course were notified in June by TMS and given 20 days to finish the course so that they can receive a certificate of

completion. If the course was not completed within those 20 days, the learner will have to re-start the training from the beginning. For more information, contact Carolyn Williams, Diversity Training Specialist, ODI, at [Carolyn.Williams12@va.gov](mailto:Carolyn.Williams12@va.gov).

## IALPAE Conference

The International Association of Latino Public Administration Executives (IALPAE) will hold its Executive Leadership, Diversity & Training Conference on August 27–29, 2013, at the Holiday Inn-Key Bridge in Arlington, Virginia. The theme for this year's conference is "Leading the President's Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion: Demonstrating Excellence, Equity, Integrity, and Transparency in Public Service." This conference qualifies as training in compliance with 5 U.S.C. Chapter 41 and is open to all Federal employees. The Conference will offer workshops and presentations aimed at enhancing executive skills and preparing individuals for the Senior Executive Service. Georgia Coffey, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion, will be the keynote speaker during the luncheon on August 27. IALPAE, Inc is a nonprofit professional membership organization founded in 2006. Their mission is to be a leading public service organization that advances the dissemination of information on public administration, promotes the value of public administration and public service as a career, particularly to the Latino community, and provides networking and professional development opportunities to individuals committed to public service, entrepreneurship, human rights, and democracy globally. All VA attendees must follow appropriate conference attendance approval procedures established for their respective organizations. Costs associated with attending the conference must be authorized by your organization. Additional information is available at <http://www.ialpae.org>. Prior to registering, you must receive appropriate approvals including travel approval from your organization.

### **Diversity News: An Online Training Resource**

The July/August 2013 edition of *Diversity News* features a report on the end of fiscal year 2012 VA workforce data. *Diversity News* is available both on the internal VA Knowledge Network and on ODI's external Web site. To view current and past episodes, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx>. **Continued on page 8.**





# Candidates with Targeted Disabilities

## *Meeting the Secretary's Hiring Goal*

In support of the Secretary's goal that three percent of new hires be people with targeted disabilities, it is important to note that all of the individuals hired through the Homeless Veterans Supported Employment Program (HVSEP) Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist (VRS) are Veterans with targeted disabilities who are eligible to be hired to permanent positions via the Schedule A process. As part of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs' Plan to Eliminate Homelessness, beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2011, medical centers were funded to hire new Homeless Veteran Supported Employment Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists, utilizing the Schedule A hiring authority.

For these positions, medical centers were required to recruit and hire Veterans who were homeless, formerly homeless and at-risk of homelessness into time-limited Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist (VRS) positions for HVSEP. This program provides vocational assistance, job development and placement, and ongoing employment supports designed to improve employment outcomes among homeless Veterans. HVSEP is coordinated between Therapeutic and Supported Employment Services and the Homeless Program Office, for the purpose of providing community-based vocational and employment services.

Throughout the initiative, the 402 funded VRS positions have been filled by Veterans with targeted disabilities through the use of Schedule A. Of those HVSEP VRS staff, 66 Veterans (16 percent out of those initially hired) have been successfully hired into permanent VA employment, within the Veterans Health Administration and the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). Examples of the permanent positions the HVSEP VRS have transitioned into are: Compensated Work Therapy Program staff, Peer Support Technicians, Administrative Staff, Homeless Program staff, and VBA Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. VA Central Office funding for this initiative is scheduled to end in FY 2014 and the time-limited appointments will conclude at that time.

These HVSEP VRS employees offer an exceptional labor pool and opportunity for VA Medical Centers to promote the hiring and retention of persons with targeted disabilities into our VA labor force through the use of the Schedule A Non-Competitive Hiring Authority. HVSEP VRS are highly qualified individuals, having been trained in the provision of vocational services, direct patient care, integrated team approach, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, and VA policies and procedures. Facilities that have not yet met the Secretary's three percent hiring goal or need to improve their on-board numbers may wish to consider these employees. To hire one of these individuals, please contact the Compensated Work Therapy Program at the closest VHA facility.

## WRP Update

### *50 Workforce Recruitment Program Interns Confirmed*

ODI is pleased to announce that as of August 2013, through VA's centralized fund administered by ODI, there are 50 Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) interns confirmed for fiscal year (FY) 2013. One third of *all* WRP hires in the Federal government are working for VA this fiscal year. In addition, VA has exceeded the goal to employ at least 40 college students and recent graduates with disabilities as summer interns through the WRP and is the second Federal agency with the most interns this fiscal year, congratulations! Kudos to the following Veterans Integrated Service Networks: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, and 22 for hiring WRP Interns. Also, kudos to the VBA Eastern Area, Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care, Office of Security for Operations and Preparedness, NCA ADR and Diversity Office, VACO Office of Management, VHA CBO Resource Center, and VHA Service Center for WRP hires. The WRP provides Federal job opportunities for college students and recent graduates with disabilities, some of whom are Veterans, and is coordinated annually by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy and the U.S. Department of Defense. The WRP is an excellent recruitment and workforce succession tool that can be used to identify qualified candidates to fill temporary or permanent staffing needs in a variety of occupations. More information is available on VA's Disability Program Web site at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx#WRP>.



# Do you have great skills?

Veterans want VA workers who have great skills. And we know you want top-notch skills too. That's why VA offers a wealth of benefits, services and programs to help you strengthen your abilities and create a satisfying career. VA's renowned corporate university, the **VA Learning University (VALU)**, offers training and resources that will develop your job skills ... boost your leadership,

communication and teamwork expertise ... and help you grow as a person. Choose from courses in project management, business writing, stress management and more. Or download a free book from our vast online library. Go to <http://www.valu.va.gov/> and get started today. You work hard to help America's heroes, that's why **we care for you while you care for our Veterans.**

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES & ADMINISTRATION  
**ADVANCE**  
TRANSFORMING POTENTIAL INTO PERFORMANCE

**VA**



**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

# Policy Alerts

## *Employee/Management Relations*

A change has been made to VA Handbook 5021 in regards to the Table of Penalties contained in Appendix A of Part I and Part II. The change adds a new penalty range for failure to adhere to the rules governing the use of purchase cards, convenience checks, and travel cards, and establishes a consolidated Table of Penalties for all VA employees instead of separate tables for employees covered by Title 5, Hybrid, and Title 38.

The change will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5021 in the near future.

## *Performance Management*

Changes have been made to VA Handbook 5013, Part I to include the processes for addressing the poor performance of Title 5 and Hybrid employees. The policy now reflects the regulatory requirements outlined in Title 5 of the United States Code, Chapter 43; and Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulation, Chapter 432. This new policy language addresses the steps supervisors/managers should take when an employee's performance in both critical and non-critical elements becomes unacceptable as well as the applicable actions to take upon the employee's completion of the opportunity to improve period.

Additionally, the revisions clarify the processes to be followed when an employee fails to complete a supervisory/managerial probationary period due to performance deficiencies; including outlining what actions to take, reconsideration requests, and employee appeal rights.

The changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5013 in the near future.

# MyCareer@VA Update



## *VA Leaders Share Advice at CareerTalk to Help You Shape Your Career*

Have you ever wanted to sit down for coffee with a senior leader and ask questions about their career, how they got to where they are today, and what lessons they learned along the way?

Though a valuable commodity, informal conversations like this can be hard to come by. For this reason, MyCareer@VA (<http://www.mycareeratva.va.gov>) is pleased to provide this kind of information to all VA employees through its fresh new resource, CareerTalk (<http://www.mycareeratva.va.gov/Resources/Pages/CareerTalk.aspx>).

Launched in June, CareerTalk is a unique audio interview series that gives you a front row seat to candid conversations with senior leaders at VA. The CareerTalk interviews are available online at MyCareer@VA, and each interview consists of five segments of 2-3 minutes.

The first CareerTalk interview series features Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for VA's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. In her interview, she talks about her first job, her passion for civil rights, and the advice she would give to employees beginning their careers at VA, particularly for those in underrepresented groups. You can also learn why Ms. Coffey challenges all employees to visit VA's talent management system at least every other week.

Additional leader interviews will be posted regularly, so check back often for new posts. As you learn how these VA leaders achieved career goals, overcame obstacles, and made the most of opportunities, we hope you feel inspired and empowered to take charge of your professional future. Don't forget that there are a multitude of other career development resources available to you at <http://www.mycareeratva.va.gov>. Need help getting started? Visit the Getting Started page (<http://www.mycareeratva.va.gov/about/currentemployees/Pages/CurrentEmployees.aspx>) to find the next step that is right for you!



# Commemorate

Continued from page 1.

This one day, every year, will always hold such significance in remembering the history of the struggle, resilience, unwavering dedication, and achievements of women. Although much progress has been made, there are still many areas to be improved and more work is needed. An article published by the Government Executive Media Group (2013) regarding a study conducted by the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service and Deloitte on comparisons of men and women's views in the Federal workplace on topics such as diversity and inclusion, leadership, empowerment, job satisfaction, etc. revealed that there were some gender differences in response. The study concluded that "women in the federal workforce report feeling less empowered than their male colleagues," there are more negative responses on quality of work life for women employees with disabilities and those without disabilities, women felt less "comfortable disclosing violations of laws," and women rated their supervisors and managers lower on working with employees of different backgrounds than men did.

Those findings led to the recommendations that supervisors and managers help address the findings by establishing a shared vision, shared values and practices among agency leaders to connect diversity and inclusion to agency mission; actively recruit and develop a diverse workforce, including development of leaders; and build a culture of commitment to diversity and inclusion, such as support for employee participation in affinity groups.

ODI is on the leading edge of ensuring VA has a culturally competent workforce by providing diversity and inclusion training to all VA supervisors, managers, and employees. In addition, the VA Learning University (VALU) continues to add to their already robust selection of training and development offerings through the Talent Management System (TMS). Additionally, VALU has worked diligently to ensure opportunities for employment and career planning through the MyCareer@VA portal. VA continually strives to enhance opportunities for training and career progression of all employees, including women, to ensure VA has a highly competent, diverse, and high-performing workforce to better meet the needs of our Veterans and their families.

## References:

Government Executive Media Group. Female Feds Feel Less Empowered Than Males, Survey Finds. Retrieved July 15, 2013 from <http://www.govexec.com/management/2013/07/female-feds-feel-less-empowered-males-survey-finds/66467/#.UeVglgv7lWs.email>.

National Women's History Project. Equality Day. Retrieved July 15, 2013 from <http://www.nwhp.org/resourcecenter/equalityday.php>.

## VA Leading Way in D&I Training

### *External Organizations Invite ODI Trainer*

On June 24, during Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month, Dr. John Fuller, Chief Diversity Advisor and Nationwide Trainer with ODI's Training & Communications team, presented "LGBT Diversity and Cultural Competency" at the Pentagon for their training entitled, "Diversity and the Demise of DOMA." Dr. Fuller presented the compelling case for the value of diversity and inclusion in the workplace using data to underscore the business, moral, and social case for embracing diversity. Training coordinators attested that they received a substantial amount of positive feedback on his presentation. Dr. Fuller also presented at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and United States Strategic Command Center for Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction on June 19 at the McNamara Headquarters Complex's first Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Event. His message focused on the importance of leadership and employee engagement on diversity and inclusion in the workplace and on increasing awareness of the challenges faced by the LGBT community. For more information on ODI's diversity and inclusion training function and how the Training Team can assist your office, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/training>.

# Training

## BIG National Training Institute



Blacks in Government (BIG) will hold its 35th Annual National Training Institute (NTI) from August 19–22, 2013, at the Hilton Anatole in Dallas, Texas. The theme for this year's conference is "Strategizing and Strengthening Government Leadership in the Global Economy." ODI, in collaboration with the BIG VA Headquarters Chapter, will present a no-cost VA Agency Forum on Tuesday, August 20, 2013, from 8 to 10 a.m. VA employees are invited to review information related to conference registration costs, course descriptions, and schedules at <http://bignet.org/index.php/2013-nti-dallas-texas>. As always, supervisory approval is required to attend this conference. All attendees must follow VA conference attendance approval procedures established for their respective organizations. Attendance is subject to availability of local training and travel resources authorized by your organization. For information about VA's Black Employment Program, contact Trina Faison, National African American Employment Program Manager, ODI, at [Trina.Faison@va.gov](mailto:Trina.Faison@va.gov). For information about VA's participation in this event, contact Renae Allen, African American Veterans Liaison, Center for Minority Veterans at [Renae.Allen@va.gov](mailto:Renae.Allen@va.gov). See the **July 2013** issue of *Diversity@Work* for more details about the NTI.

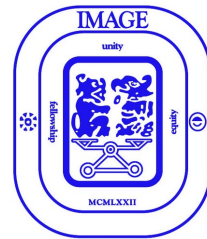
### Section 508 Compliance Training

The Section 508 Program Office currently offers six training classes to help you understand Section 508. Everyone has a responsibility to create information that meets the Federal Section 508 standards. Section 508 is a Federal law that applies to you.

- Introduction to Section 508, August 22, 10 a.m. to noon
- Creating Accessible Microsoft Word Documents and Converting to Accessible PDF, August 27, 10 a.m. to noon
- Converting Scanned PDF Documents to Accessible PDF, August 28, 10 a.m. to noon
- Introduction to JAWS, August 19, 2 to 3 p.m.
- Creating Accessible PowerPoint Presentations, August 15, 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.
- Creating Accessible Excel Files, August 20, 1 to 2 p.m.

Please send an e-mail to the Section 508 Program Office ([Section508@va.gov](mailto:Section508@va.gov)) for enrollment to these classes or if you have additional questions.

## Image National Training Program



National Image, Inc. will hold its 41st Annual National Training Program (NTP) September 9–13, 2013, at the BWI Airport Marriott in Linthicum, Maryland. The theme for this year's conference is "Serving the Hispanic Community Through: Leadership, Development, Partnership and Outreach." The Image NTP qualifies as training in compliance with 5 U.S.C Chapter 41. The Image NTP is open to all Federal employees, and will provide informative workshops in the areas of equal employment opportunity and human resources, Veteran benefits, leadership development, and diversity and inclusion. Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion, will serve as the keynote speaker during the NTP opening session on Tuesday, September 10, at 9:00 a.m. In addition, Arlene Gonzalez, National Hispanic Employment Program (HEP) Manager, ODI, will share the steps taken by VA in the development of its Fiscal Year (FY) 2013–2016 Hispanic Employment, Retention and Outreach (HERO) Strategic Plan.

In conjunction with the NTP, ODI will be conducting its 3rd Annual HEP Managers' Training and Policy Summit on Monday, September 9 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. as part of the Pre-NTP agency professional development forums. The summit will be a no-cost training opportunity designed for VA HEP Managers who are in the local area or attending the NTP. The summit will feature remarks from members of the VA Senior Executive Service who will provide insights on leadership, accountability and policy. Attendees will also be given an overview of the HERO Strategic Plan and will be invited to participate in group breakout sessions tasked with developing front line HERO plans for their respective facilities. Participation in VA's summit will be limited to the first 49 employees who register in TMS: [https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink\\_redirect.jsp?linkId=SCHEDULED\\_OFFERING\\_DETAILS&scheduleID=2600478](https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=SCHEDULED_OFFERING_DETAILS&scheduleID=2600478). Please note that registration via TMS does not constitute registration for the main conference.

Prior to registering for the NTP, each employee must receive appropriate approval, including travel approval, from their organization. Costs associated with attending the main conference must be authorized by the employee's organization. Additional conference and training information such as conference registration costs, course descriptions, and schedules are available at <http://www.national-image.org>. For additional information or to request a disability accommodation, contact Aurelia Waters, HEP Outreach Manager, ODI, at (202) 461-4124 or [Aurelia.Waters@va.gov](mailto:Aurelia.Waters@va.gov).



# All Things Connected

## Mental Models and Unconscious Bias



Quick! Which of these is the doctor, the CEO or the nurse?

We all have ideas of what people or things “should” be like. These *mental models* create default images that frame our expectations of reality. For you, a doctor may conjure up a gray-haired man with a stethoscope; the nurse must be a woman; and the CEO a balding, White male. However, what happens if the nurse is a young Hispanic man; the doctor is a

Ph.D. university professor; or the CEO is a middle-aged woman with long hair? Have you ever heard someone say, “You don’t act like a minister,” “You don’t look like a grandmother,” or “He doesn’t sound like a politician?” When the picture is different from our mental model, our brains do an instant recalibration to align what we expect to see with what is in front of us.

Mental models arise from many influences, including our life experiences and prevailing media images. If I have limited exposure to people who don’t look/think/act like me, I’m likely to maintain a more rigid mental model. I’m also apt to carry judgments and assumptions based on past information into future situations. In truth, we make many decisions on the basis of unconscious mental models.

There is interesting research on unconscious bias. For example, attractive job applicants are more successful on the whole, even if they are less qualified. Overweight individuals and people with ethnic speech patterns can have a tougher time in the job market, even when they are highly qualified. And consider this: less than 15 percent of American men are over six feet tall. Yet almost 60 percent of corporate CEOs are men over six feet tall.

Our mental models are also especially shaped by language. Words are inordinately powerful. During the ’70s, we became sensitized to exclusionary language: derogatory ethnic labels, gender-specific pronouns, etc. Many thought that society went off the deep end with this. However, if the hero wears the white hat, and the villain wears the black hat, is there a subtle message conveyed about the “good” of white and the “bad” of black? A well-known talk radio host cynically references anchormen and “anchoresses.” Noting that the dictionary definition of *ette* is “a diminutive; a cheap imitation—as in leather/leatherette”—it’s hard to believe the inference isn’t deliberate!

When we talk about the judge, the firefighter or the medical center director as he, or the teacher, the nurse and the secretary as she, does it influence the choices we make, how we think and who we hire? Does it affect our diversity, succession planning and organizational culture? I had the good fortune of working for an organization that mounted a campaign to eliminate exclusionary language—not because it was politically correct, but because it improved innovation, productivity and engagement. This company knew that inclusive language helps create a culture of inclusion.

Sometimes it almost seems like we are hard-wired to exclude! How, then, do we learn to build bridges instead of fences?

From a personal perspective, here’s what I find helpful:

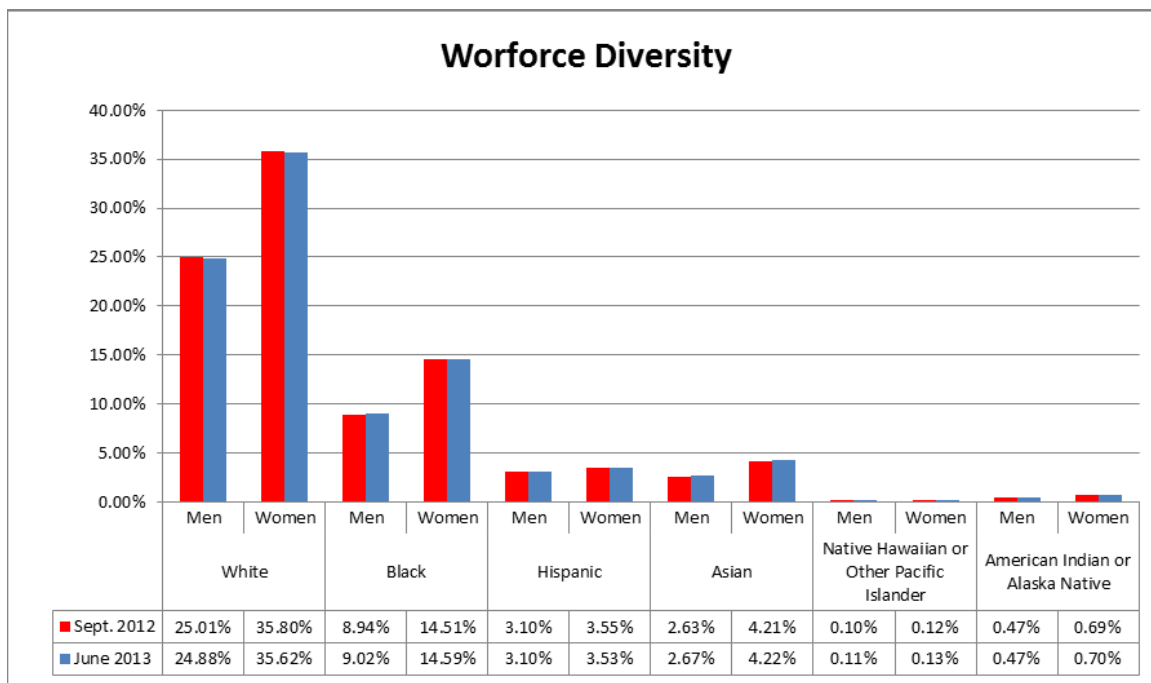
- Seek first to understand. Respect each other’s personal truth. I may not be able to experience your reality, but I can listen to it.
- Spend time thinking about what connects us, not just what separates us; our common bonds. At our core, we are much more alike than different.
- Reflect on the larger scheme of things. Jung’s concept of the Collective Unconscious suggests that we are ‘plugged into’ a greater consciousness or world mind. The new physics teaches us that below the level of physical matter there is no separation—no fences. My subatomic particles flow into your subatomic particles as a kind of permeable membrane. At the subatomic level, we are all one. When we connect with each other more deeply and with intention, we can better appreciate each other’s realities, and we “plug in” in profound ways. When we seriously look for bridges, then that is what we find.

Everything is connected to everything else...~Linda Belton, Director, Organizational Health, VHA National Center for Organization Development

# VA Demographics Report

*Demographic Report for the Department of Veterans Affairs, June 2013*

VA's workforce diversity remains relatively steady through June 2013. Although the VA workforce increased by approximately 7.9 thousand employees, the changes in representation for all groups in VA's permanent and temporary workforce were negligible.



Comparing the demographic characteristics of VA's workforce against the Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF)\*, the representation of White women and Hispanic women are lower than expected. White women representation is currently at 74 percent of RCLF while Hispanic women are at 81 percent of RCLF. The representation of White men is lower than expected too, but is not considered to be significant. They are currently at 99.6 percent of their RCLF.

## Diversity Index

The Diversity Index is a single measure of workforce diversity that measures the convergence of VA's aggregate workforce distribution by race, ethnicity, and gender to the Civilian Labor Force (CLF)\*\* or RCLF. Since September 2012, there has been 0.31 percentage point increase in the RCLF-based diversity index and a 0.84 percentage point increase in the CLF-based diversity index.

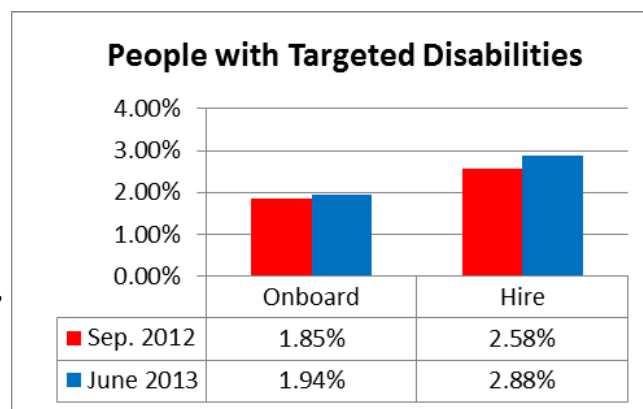
	Sep.2012	June 2013	Change
Using RCLF	96.33%	96.64%	0.31%
Using CLF	85.75%	86.59%	0.84%

## People with Targeted Disabilities

The proportion of people with targeted disabilities in VA's workforce has increased by 0.09 percentage points since the beginning of the fiscal year and is now reported with a status of green (within 5 percentage points of the Secretary's 2 percent goal) in VA's Monthly Performance Report.

The hiring of people with targeted disabilities also increased since the start of the fiscal year. Among all hires, people with targeted disabilities represent 2.88 percent, 0.12 percentage point below the Secretary's 3 percent hiring goal.

For more information, contact ODI's Workforce Analysis Team at [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov).



\*Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF) reflects all the people 16 years of age or over, excluding those in Armed Forces, who are employed in or actively seeking employment in VA specific occupations.

\*\*Civilian Labor Force (CLF) consists of all people, 16 years of age or over, excluding those in Armed Forces, who are employed or seeking employment. The CLF contains all occupations and is an accurate comparative basis for Federal Government-wide comparison, the largest employer in the U.S. with all occupations represented.

Diversity@Work  
is published by the U.S.  
Department of Veterans  
Affairs' (VA's) Office of  
Diversity and Inclusion (ODI),  
a program office within the  
Office of Human Resources  
and Administration (HR&A).

To subscribe or unsubscribe,  
e-mail [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov).

#### CONTACT US

Mail:  
810 Vermont Avenue  
NW (06)  
Washington, DC 20420

Phone:  
(202) 461-4131

Fax:  
(202) 501-2145

E-mail the Editor:  
[odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov)

Visit our Web site  
[http://www.diversity.  
va.gov](http://www.diversity.va.gov)  
for staff e-mail  
addresses.

#### OTHER USEFUL LINKS

HR&A  
[http://www.va.gov/  
employee](http://www.va.gov/employee)

VA's Office of Human  
Resources Management  
<http://www.va.gov/ohrm>

VA's Office of Resolution  
Management  
<http://www.va.gov/orm>

Resolution Support Center  
[http://www.va.gov/ORM/  
RSC.asp](http://www.va.gov/ORM/RSC.asp)

Veterans Health  
Administration's Diversity and  
Inclusion Community of  
Practice  
[Michael.Youngblood@  
va.gov](mailto:Michael.Youngblood@va.gov)

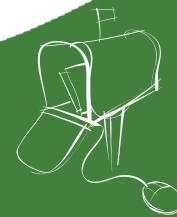
#### GOT NEWS?

We want to hear from you! If  
you'd like to share your story  
ideas, comments, or  
suggestions, e-mail us at  
[odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov).

# D&I Online

The mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs' diversity and inclusion program is to develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated, and strategic focus on diversity and inclusion as key components of the Department's human resources strategies. Here's a sampling of online tools available at <http://www.diversity.va.gov> that can help leverage diversity and build inclusion:

- ▶ Women's Equality Day and other observance resources.
- ▶ Training resources, guides, and reports.
- ▶ Links to professional and community organizations.
- ▶ Best practices for diversity management.



## D&I In Your E-mail Inbox

ODI sends out *NewsLink*, an e-mail message with annotated links to current news items and other information related to leveraging diversity and building inclusion. For a FREE subscription to this electronic news service, e-mail [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov) with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWSLINK in the subject line. Find a sample of *NewsLink* at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/newslink.aspx>.

## D&I on Your TV or PC

*Diversity News* is a video program co-produced by ODI and the VA Central Office Broadcast Center for you. *Diversity News* follows VA News on the VA Knowledge Network, Content Distribution Network, channel 2. Programs are also available at [http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/  
dn.aspx](http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx).

## 2013 Calendar

<http://www.diversity.va.gov/calendar>

### AUGUST

V-J Day  
August 14

Women's Equality Day  
August 26

International Association of Latino Public  
Administration Executives 2013 Annual  
Executive Leadership & Diversity Training  
Conference  
August 27–29; Arlington, VA  
<http://www.ialpae.org>

16th Annual Examining Conflicts in  
Employment Laws Training Conference  
August 27–29; Denver, CO  
[http://eeotraining.eeoc.gov/  
EXCEL2013](http://eeotraining.eeoc.gov/EXCEL2013)

50th Anniversary of the March on  
Washington for Jobs and Freedom  
August 28

### SEPTEMBER

National Organization for Mexican American  
Rights, Inc. Leadership Training Seminars  
September 3–5; San Antonio, TX  
<http://www.nomarinc.org>

National Image, Inc. Annual Training  
Conference and Exposition  
September 9–13; Baltimore, MD  
[http://www.national-image.org/2013-  
national-image-training-program](http://www.national-image.org/2013-national-image-training-program)

National Hispanic Heritage Month  
September 15–October 15

African American Federal Executive  
Association Training Workshop  
September 16–17; Washington, DC  
<http://www.aafea.org>